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United States Attorney  
District of Hawaii

FILED IN THE  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF HAWAII  
Jan 17, 2023 2:11 pm  
John A. Mapple, Clerk of Court

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Chief, Criminal Division

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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF HAWAII

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ) CR. NO. 22-00049 JAO  
 )  
Plaintiff, ) MEMORANDUM OF PLEA  
 ) AGREEMENT  
vs. )  
 ) DATE:  
MATTHEW BELANGER, ) TIME:  
 ) JUDGE: JILL A. OTAKE  
Defendant. )  
 )

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**MEMORANDUM OF PLEA AGREEMENT**

Pursuant to Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, by its attorney, the United States Attorney for  
the District of Hawaii, and the defendant, MATTHEW BELANGER, and his

attorneys, Katryna Lyn Spearman, Esq. and Leighton Lee, Esq., have agreed upon the following:

**THE CHARGES**

1. The defendant acknowledges that he has been charged in the Indictment with violating Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371, 922(a)(6), 924(a)(2), 924(a)(1)(A), and 2.
2. The defendant has read the charges against him contained in the Indictment, and those charges have been fully explained to him by his attorney.
3. The defendant fully understands the nature and elements of the crimes with which he has been charged.

**THE AGREEMENT**

4. The defendant will enter a voluntary plea of guilty to Counts 1 and 2 of the Indictment, which charge him with Conspiring to Make a False Statement to a Federal Firearm Licensee (Count 1) and Making a False Material Statement During the Purchase of a Firearm (Count 2). In return, the government agrees to move to dismiss Count 3 of the Indictment as to the defendant after sentencing.

5. The defendant agrees that this Memorandum of Plea Agreement shall be filed and become part of the record in this case.

6. The defendant enters this plea because he is in fact guilty of Conspiring to Make a False Statement to a Federal Firearm Licensee (Count 1) and

Making a False Material Statement During the Purchase of a Firearm (Count 2) as charged in Counts 1 and 2 of the Indictment, and he agrees that this plea is voluntary and not the result of force or threats.

**PENALTIES**

7. The defendant understands that the penalties for the offenses to which he is pleading guilty include:

- a. As to Count 1, a term of imprisonment of up to 5 years and a fine of up to \$250,000, plus a term of supervised release up to 3 years.
- b. As to Count 2, a term of imprisonment of up to 10 years and a fine of up to \$250,000, plus a term of supervised release up to 3 years.
- c. In addition, the Court must impose a \$100 special assessment as to each count to which the defendant is pleading guilty. The defendant agrees to pay \$100 for each count to which he is pleading guilty to the District Court's Clerk's Office, to be credited to said special assessments, before the commencement of any portion of sentencing. The defendant acknowledges that failure to make such full advance payment in a form and manner acceptable to the prosecution will allow, though not require, the prosecution to withdraw from this Agreement at its option.
- d. **Forfeiture.** Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 924(d), forfeiture of any firearms or ammunition subject to forfeiture pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 924(d).

### **FACTUAL STIPULATIONS**

8. The defendant admits the following facts and agrees that they are not a detailed recitation, but merely an outline of what happened in relation to the charges to which the defendant is pleading guilty:

a. During April 2020 and May 2020, the defendant and Associate 1 entered into an agreement whereby Associate 1 would purchase falsely in the name of Associate 1 a firearm, namely a Luger 9 mm pistol, serial number 71777, (“Luger”) on behalf of the defendant from a federal firearms licensee (“FFL”). During the conspiracy, and at the time Associate 1 purchased the firearm on or about May 20, 2020, the defendant was present in the District of Hawaii, Associate 1 resided on Long Island, New York, and the FFL was located in the Eastern District of New York. At the time the agreement was formed between the defendant and Associate 1, both knew (1) purchasing a firearm in one’s own name that was actually on behalf of another person violated federal law; and (2) the Luger could not be legally possessed by the defendant under the laws of the State of New York.

b. In furtherance of the conspiracy, the defendant, while in the District of Hawaii, and Associate 1 communicated electronically regarding the purchase of the Luger, and on or about April 21, 2020, the defendant, while in the District of Hawaii, electronically transferred funds to Associate 1 to cover the cost

of the Luger. Thereafter, on behalf of the defendant, Associate 1 ordered the Luger selected by the defendant from an online merchant for delivery through the FFL on Long Island, New York. On or about May 20, 2020, on behalf of the defendant, Associate 1 completed the purchase of the Luger at the Long Island, New York FFL.

c. In connection with the purchase of the Luger, Associate 1 completed and signed the buyer portions of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tabaco, Firearms and Explosives Form 4473, entitled Firearms Transaction Record, on or about May 20, 2020. The Form 4473 is required by federal law to be completed by the buyer of a firearm from an FFL licensee, and the FFL is required by law to keep the Form 4473 in its records.

d. Question 11.a on the Form 4473 reads, “Are you the actual transferee/buyer of the firearm(s) listed on this form? **Warning: You are not the actual transferee/buyer if you are acquiring the firearm(s) on behalf of another person. If you are not the actual transferee/buyer, the licensee cannot transfer the firearm(s) to you.**” (bold in original). The instructions on the Form 4473 explain with respect to Question 11.a:

**Question 11.a. Actual Transferee/Buyer:** For purposes of this form, a person is the actual transferee/buyer if he/she is purchasing the firearm for him/herself or otherwise acquiring the firearm for him/herself. (e.g., *redeeming the firearm from pawn, retrieving it from consignment, firearm raffle winner*). A person is also the actual transferee/buyer if he/she is legitimately purchasing the firearm as a bona fide gift for a third party. A

gift is not bona fide if another person offered or gave the person completing this form money, service(s), or item(s) of value to acquire the firearm for him/her, or if the other person is prohibited by law from receiving or possessing the firearm.

**Actual TRANSFeree/buyer examples:** Mr. Smith asks Mr. Jones to purchase a firearm for Mr. Smith (who may or may not be prohibited). Mr. Smith gives Mr. Jones the money for the firearm. Mr. Jones is **NOT THE ACTUAL TRANSFeree/BUYER** of the firearm and must answer “**NO**” to question 11.a. The licensee may not transfer the firearm to Mr. Jones. However, if Mr. Brown buys the firearm with his own money to give to Mr. Black as a gift (with no service or tangible thing of value provided by Mr. Black), Mr. Brown is the actual transferee/buyer of the firearm and should answer “**YES**” to question 11.a. However, the transferor/seller may not transfer a firearm to any person he/she knows or has reasonable cause to believe is prohibited under 18 U.S.C. 922(g), (n) or (x). **EXCEPTION:** If a person is picking up a repaired firearm(s) for another person, he/she is not required to answer 11.a. and may proceed to question 11.b.

(bold and italics in original).

e. On the Form 4473, Associate 1 responded to Question 11.a by checking the “Yes” box, which was a knowing false statement that he was the actual buyer of each firearm, rather than the defendant. With regard to the purchase of the Luger, as described above, Associate 1 bought the firearm for the defendant at the direction of the defendant, and Associate 1 had already accepted the funds for payment for the firearm from the defendant prior to completing the Form 4473.

f. By signing the Form 4473, Associate 1 certified as follows:

**I certify that my answers in Section A are true, correct, and complete. I have read and understand the Notices, Instructions, and Definitions on ATF Form 4473. I understand that answering “yes” to question 11.a. if I**

**am not the actual transferee/buyer is a crime punishable as a felony under Federal law, and may also violate State and/or local law. I understand that a person who answers “yes” to any of the questions 11.b. through 11.i and/or 12.b. through 12.c. is prohibited from purchasing or receiving a firearm. I understand that a person who answers “yes” to question 12.d.1. is prohibited from receiving or possessing a firearm, unless the person answers “yes” to question 12.d.2. and provides the documentation required in 18.c. I also understand that making any false oral or written statement, or exhibiting any false or misrepresented identification with respect to this transaction, is a crime punishable as a felony under Federal law, and may also violate State and/or local law. I further understand that the repetitive purchase of firearms for the purpose of resale for livelihood and profit without a Federal firearms license is a violation of Federal law. (See Instructions for Question 14.)**

(bold and italics in original). The false statement on the Form 4473 with regard to the identity of the actual buyer was intended by the defendant and Associate 1 to deceive the FFL with respect to a fact material to the lawfulness of the sale of the Luger.

g. Prior to entering into the conspiracy, both the defendant and Associate 1 knew that Associate 1 would be required by law to certify under penalty that he was the actual buyer of the Luger when, in fact, the defendant was the actual buyer. During 2019, the defendant and Associate 1 had similarly conspired to purchase falsely in the name of Associate 1 a firearm, namely a PTR Industries PTR91 rifle, serial number GL13230, (“PTR91”) on behalf of the defendant from an FFL. As with the Luger, the defendant selected the PTR91 from the website of an online merchant and provided the funds for the purchase to

Associate 1, who completed the purchase of the PTR91 at the Long Island, New York FFL on or about June 18, 2019, and in connection with that purchase completed and signed a Form 4473, in which Associate 1 falsely certified that he was the actual buyer when, in fact, the defendant was the actual buyer. Additionally, prior to the purchase of the PTR91, the defendant had purchased two firearms on separate occasions from an FFL and completed and signed Forms 4473 in connection with those purchases.

9. Pursuant to CrimLR 32.1(a) of the Local Rules of the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii, the parties agree that the charges to which the defendant is pleading guilty adequately reflect the seriousness of the actual offense behavior and that accepting this Agreement will not undermine the statutory purposes of sentencing.

### **SENTENCING STIPULATIONS**

10. Pursuant to CrimLR 32.1(b) of the Local Rules of the United States District Court for the District of Hawaii and Section 6Bl.4 of the Sentencing Guidelines, the parties stipulate to the following for the purpose of the sentencing of the defendant in connection with this matter:

a. As of the date of this agreement, it is expected that the defendant will enter a plea of guilty prior to the commencement of trial, will truthfully admit his involvement in the offense and related conduct, and will not

engage in conduct that is inconsistent with such acceptance of responsibility. If all of these events occur, and the defendant's acceptance of responsibility continues through the date of sentencing, a downward adjustment of 2 levels for acceptance of responsibility will be appropriate. *See U.S.S.G. § 3E1.1(a) and Application Note 3.*

b. The United States Attorney agrees that the defendant's agreement herein to enter into a guilty plea constitutes notice of intent to plead guilty in a timely manner, so as to permit the government to avoid preparing for trial as to the defendant. Accordingly, the United States Attorney anticipates moving in the Government's Sentencing Statement for a one-level reduction in sentencing offense level pursuant to Guideline § 3E1.1(b), if the defendant is otherwise eligible. The defendant understands that notwithstanding its present intentions, and still within the Agreement, the prosecution reserves the rights (1) to argue to the contrary in the event of receipt of new information relating to those issues, and (2) to call and examine witnesses on those issues in the event that either the United States Probation Office finds to the contrary of the prosecution's intentions or the Court requests that evidence be presented on those issues.

11. The parties agree that notwithstanding the parties' Agreement herein, the Court is not bound by any stipulation entered into by the parties but may, with the aid of the presentence report, determine the facts relevant to sentencing. The

parties understand that the Court's rejection of any stipulation between the parties does not constitute a refusal to accept this Agreement since the Court is expressly not bound by stipulations between the parties.

12. The parties represent that as of the date of this agreement there are no material facts in dispute.

#### **APPEAL/COLLATERAL REVIEW**

13. The defendant is aware that he has the right to appeal his conviction and the sentence imposed. The defendant knowingly and voluntarily waives the right to appeal, except as indicated in subparagraph "b" below, his conviction and any sentence within the Guidelines range as determined by the Court at the time of sentencing, and any lawful restitution or forfeiture order imposed, or the manner in which the sentence, restitution, or forfeiture order was determined, on any ground whatsoever, in exchange for the concessions made by the prosecution in this Agreement. The defendant understands that this waiver includes the right to assert any and all legally waivable claims.

a. The defendant also waives the right to challenge his conviction or sentence or the manner in which it was determined in any collateral attack, including, but not limited to, a motion brought under Title 28, United States Code, Section 2255, except that the defendant may make such a challenge (1) as

indicated in subparagraph "b" below, or (2) based on a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel.

b. If the Court imposes a sentence greater than specified in the guideline range determined by the Court to be applicable to the defendant, the defendant retains the right to appeal the portion of his sentence greater than specified in that guideline range and the manner in which that portion was determined and to challenge that portion of his sentence in a collateral attack.

c. The prosecution retains its right to appeal the sentence and the manner in which it was determined on any of the grounds stated in Title 18, United States Code, Section 3742(b).

#### **FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE**

14. In connection with the collection of restitution or other financial obligations, including forfeiture as set forth below, that may be imposed upon him, the defendant agrees as follows:

a. The defendant agrees to fully disclose all assets in which he has any interest or over which he exercises control, directly or indirectly, including any assets held by a spouse, nominee, or third party. The defendant understands that the United States Probation Office (USPO) will conduct a presentence investigation that will require the defendant to complete a comprehensive financial statement. To avoid the requirement of the defendant completing financial

statements for both the USPO and the government, the defendant agrees to truthfully complete a financial statement provided to the defendant by the United States Attorney's Office. The defendant agrees to complete the disclosure statement and provide it to the USPO within the time frame required by the United States Probation officer assigned to the defendant's case. The defendant understands that the USPO will in turn provide a copy of the completed financial statement to the United States Attorney's Office. The defendant agrees to provide written updates to both the USPO and the United States Attorney's Office regarding any material changes in circumstances, which occur prior to sentencing, within seven days of the event giving rise to the changed circumstances. The defendant's failure to timely and accurately complete and sign the financial statement, and any written update thereto, may, in addition to any other penalty or remedy, constitute the defendant's failure to accept responsibility under U.S.S.G § 3E1.1.

b. The defendant expressly authorizes the United States Attorney's Office to obtain his credit report. The defendant agrees to provide waivers, consents, or releases requested by the United States Attorney's Office to access records to verify the financial information, such releases to be valid for a period extending 90 days after the date of sentencing. The defendant also

authorizes the United States Attorney's Office to inspect and copy all financial documents and information held by the USPO.

c. Prior to sentencing, the defendant agrees to notify the Financial Litigation Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office before making any transfer of an interest in property with a value exceeding \$1,000 owned directly or indirectly, individually or jointly, by the defendant, including any interest held or owned under any name, including trusts, partnerships, and corporations.

**FORFEITURE**

15. As part of his acceptance of responsibility and pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 924(d), the defendant agrees as follows:

a. The defendant agrees to forfeit to the United States all of his right, title, and interest in the following property (the "Specific Property"):

i. a Luger 9 mm pistol, serial number 71777, and a PTR Industries PTR91 rifle, serial number GL13230.

b. The defendant acknowledges that the Specific Property is subject to forfeiture pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 924(d) as firearm(s) or ammunition subject to forfeiture pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 924(d).

c. The defendant knowingly and voluntarily waives and agrees to waive any and all constitutional, statutory, and other challenges to the forfeiture on any and all grounds, including that the forfeiture constitutes an excessive fine or

punishment under the Eighth Amendment. The defendant knowingly and voluntarily waives any right to a jury trial on the forfeiture of property.

d. The defendant agrees to consent promptly upon request to the entry of any orders deemed necessary by the government or the Court to complete the forfeiture and disposition of the property. The defendant waives the requirements of Rules 32.2 and 43(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure regarding notice of forfeiture in the charging instrument, announcement of forfeiture at sentencing, and incorporation of the forfeiture in the judgment. The defendant acknowledges that he understands that the forfeiture of the property, if the government elects to conduct the forfeiture criminally, will be part of the sentence imposed upon the defendant in this case and waives any failure by the Court to advise the defendant of this, pursuant to Rule 11(b)(1)(J) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, during the change of plea hearing. Pursuant to Rule 32.2(b)(4) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the defendant consents to the preliminary order of forfeiture for the Specific Property becoming final as to the defendant when entered.

e. The defendant agrees to waive all interest in the Specific Property in any administrative or judicial forfeiture proceeding, whether criminal or civil, state or federal, and to withdraw any claim that the defendant may have filed in such a proceeding. The defendant further waives any other notice

requirement that may apply to the administrative and/or civil forfeiture of the Specific Property.

f. The defendant understands that the forfeiture of the forfeitable property does not constitute and will not be treated as satisfaction, in whole or in part, of any fine, restitution, reimbursement of cost of imprisonment, or any other monetary penalty this Court may impose upon the defendant in addition to the forfeiture.

### **IMPOSITION OF SENTENCE**

16. The defendant understands that the District Court in imposing sentence will consider the provisions of the Sentencing Guidelines. The defendant agrees that there is no promise or guarantee of the applicability or non-applicability of any Guideline or any portion thereof, notwithstanding any representations or predictions from any source.

17. The defendant understands that this Agreement will not be accepted or rejected by the Court until there has been an opportunity by the Court to consider a presentence report, unless the Court decides that a presentence report is unnecessary. The defendant understands that the Court will not accept an agreement unless the Court determines that the remaining charges adequately reflect the seriousness of the actual offense behavior and accepting the Agreement will not undermine the statutory purposes of sentencing.

## **WAIVER OF TRIAL RIGHTS**

18. The defendant understands that by pleading guilty he surrenders certain rights, including the following:

a. If the defendant persisted in a plea of not guilty to the charges against him, then he would have the right to a public and speedy trial. The trial could be either a jury trial or a trial by a judge sitting without a jury. The defendant has a right to a jury trial. However, in order that the trial be conducted by the judge sitting without a jury, the defendant, the prosecution, and the judge all must agree that the trial be conducted by the judge without a jury.

b. If the trial is a jury trial, the jury would be composed of twelve laypersons selected at random. The defendant and his attorney would have a say in who the jurors would be by removing prospective jurors for cause where actual bias or other disqualification is shown, or without cause by exercising peremptory challenges. The jury would have to agree unanimously before it could return a verdict of either guilty or not guilty. The jury would be instructed that the defendant is presumed innocent, and that it could not convict him unless, after hearing all the evidence, it was persuaded of his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

c. If the trial is held by a judge without a jury, the judge would find the facts and determine, after hearing all the evidence, whether or not he or she was persuaded of the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

d. At a trial, whether by a jury or a judge, the prosecution would be required to present its witnesses and other evidence against the defendant. The defendant would be able to confront those prosecution witnesses and his attorney would be able to cross-examine them. In turn, the defendant could present witnesses and other evidence on his own behalf. If the witnesses for the defendant would not appear voluntarily, the defendant could require their attendance through the subpoena power of the Court.

e. At a trial, the defendant would have a privilege against self-incrimination so that he could decline to testify, and no inference of guilt could be drawn from his refusal to testify.

19. The defendant understands that by pleading guilty, he is waiving all of the rights set forth in the preceding paragraph. The defendant's attorney has explained those rights to him, and the consequences of the waiver of those rights.

#### **USE OF PLEA STATEMENTS**

20. If, after signing this Agreement, the defendant decides not to plead guilty as provided herein, or if the defendant pleads guilty but subsequently makes a motion before the Court to withdraw his guilty plea and the Court grants that motion, the defendant agrees that any admission of guilt that he makes by signing this Agreement or that he makes while pleading guilty as set forth in this Agreement may be used against him in a subsequent trial if the defendant later

proceeds to trial. The defendant voluntarily, knowingly, and intelligently waives any protection afforded by Rule 11(f) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and Rule 410 of the Federal Rules of Evidence regarding the use of statements made in this Agreement or during the course of pleading guilty when the guilty plea is later withdrawn. The *only* exception to this paragraph is where the defendant fully complies with this Agreement but the Court nonetheless rejects it. Under those circumstances, the United States may not use those statements of the defendant for any purpose.

21. The defendant understands that the prosecution will apprise the Court and the United States Probation Office of the nature, scope and extent of the defendant's conduct regarding the charges against him, related matters, and any matters in aggravation or mitigation relevant to the issues involved in sentencing.

### **COOPERATION**

22. The defendant agrees that he will fully cooperate with the United States.

a. The defendant agrees to testify truthfully at any and all trials, hearings, or any other proceedings at which the prosecution requests him to testify, including, but not limited to, any grand jury proceedings, trial proceedings involving co-defendants and others charged later in the investigation, sentencing hearings, and related civil proceedings.

b. The defendant agrees to be available to speak with law enforcement officials and representatives of the United States Attorney's Office at any time and to give truthful and complete answers at such meetings, but he understands he may have his counsel present at those conversations, if he so desires.

c. The defendant agrees he will not assert any privilege to refuse to testify at any grand jury, trial, or other proceeding, involving or related to the crimes charged in this Indictment or any subsequent charges related to this investigation, at which the prosecution requests him to testify.

d. The defendant agrees that his sentencing date may be delayed based on the government's need for the defendant's continued cooperation, and agrees not to object to any continuances of the defendant's sentencing date sought by the United States.

e. Pursuant to Section 1B1.8(a) of the Sentencing Guidelines, the prosecution agrees that self-incriminating information provided pursuant to this Agreement to cooperate will not be used in determining the applicable guideline range, except as may be provided in this Agreement and under Section 1B1.8(b) of the Sentencing Guidelines.

23. In the event that the defendant does not breach any of the terms of this Agreement but the Court nonetheless refuses to accept the Agreement after the

defendant has made statements to law enforcement authorities or representatives of the United States Attorney's Office pursuant to this Agreement, the prosecution agrees not to use said statements in its case-in-chief in the trial of the defendant in this matter. The defendant understands that this does not bar the use of information and evidence derived from said statements or prohibit the use of the statements by the prosecution in cross-examination or rebuttal.

24. Pursuant to Guidelines § 5K1.1 and Rule 35(b) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the prosecution may move the Court to depart from the Guidelines on the ground that the defendant has provided substantial assistance to authorities in the investigation or prosecution of another person who has committed an offense. The defendant understands that:

- a. The decision as to whether to make such a request or motion is entirely up to the prosecution.
- b. This Agreement does not require the prosecution to make such a request or motion.
- c. This Agreement confers neither any right upon the defendant to have the prosecution make such a request or motion, nor any remedy to the defendant in the event the prosecution fails to make such a request or motion.

d. Even in the event that the prosecution makes such a request or motion, the Court may refuse to depart from the Guidelines or to impose a sentence below the minimum level established by statute.

25. The defendant and his attorney acknowledge that, apart from any written proffer agreements, if applicable, no threats, promises, agreements or conditions have been entered into by the parties other than those set forth in this Agreement, to induce the defendant to plead guilty. Apart from any written proffer agreements, if applicable, this Agreement supersedes all prior promises, agreements or conditions between the parties.

26. To become effective, this Agreement must be signed by all signatories listed below.

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27. Should the Court refuse to accept this Agreement, it is null and void and neither party shall be bound thereto.

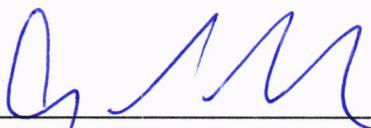
AGREED:

CLARE E. CONNORS  
United States Attorney  
District of Hawaii



KENNETH M. SORENSEN  
Chief, Criminal Division

Dated: 1/5/23



CRAIG S. NOLAN  
Assistant U.S. Attorney

Dated: 1/5/2023



MATTHEW BELANGER  
Defendant

Dated: 10-20-22

  
KATRYNA LYN SPEARMAN  
LEIGHTON LEE  
Attorneys for Defendant

Dated: 11-18-22

SS DEC-8-2023